<u>IN THE CLAIMS</u>

8. (currently amended)   <u>A method</u> ~~Method~~ for applying manganese phosphate layers to iron or steel surfaces comprising contacting workpieces with a phosphating solution comprising

    0.2   to 4 g/l of iron (II) ions

    10   to 25 g/l of manganese ions

    25   to 50 g/l of phosphate ions (calc. As P_2O_5)

    3   to 35 g/l of nitrate ions

    0.5   to 5 g/l of nitroguanidine

said solution having 7 to 24 points of free acid, 50 to 140 points of total acid, and an S value of 0.2 to 1, <u>and drying the workpieces to form a manganese phosphate layer</u> ~~wherein, after drying, the manganese phosphate layer~~ having a minimum thickness of 2 μm and an average maximum roughness depth (R^2) of 2.5 μm

9. (previously presented)   The method according to claim 8, wherein said phosphating solution that comprises 0.5 to 2 g/l of nitroguanidine.

10. (previously presented)   A method according to claim 8, wherein the phosphating solution comprises not more than 2.5 g/l of iron (II) ions.

11. (previously presented)   A method according to claim 8, wherein the workpiece is steel and said phosphating solution comprises a complex-forming agent for the alloying constituents of the steel.

12. (previously presented)   A method according to claim 11, wherein said coupler-forming agent is citric acid.

13. (currently amended)   A method according to claim 8, wherein said phosphating solution further comprises at least one <u>metal ion selected from the group consisting</u> of

0.2   to 4 g/l of nickel ions and

0.2   to 4 g/l of magnesium ions.

14. (previously presented)   A method according to claim 8, wherein at least a portion of the manganese ions in said phosphating solution are replaced by manganese carbonate to neutralize free acid.

15. (previously presented)   A the method according to claim 8, wherein said workpieces are subjected to a sliding friction.

16. (previously presented)   A method according to claim 8, wherein said workpieces are selected from the group consisting of axles, gear mechanism parts and engine pistons.